

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR
HOLY COMMUNION



salutaris hostia.
 Quæ celi pandis ostium:
 Bella premunt hostilia,
 Da robur, fer auxilium.

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

FROM THE WRITINGS OF

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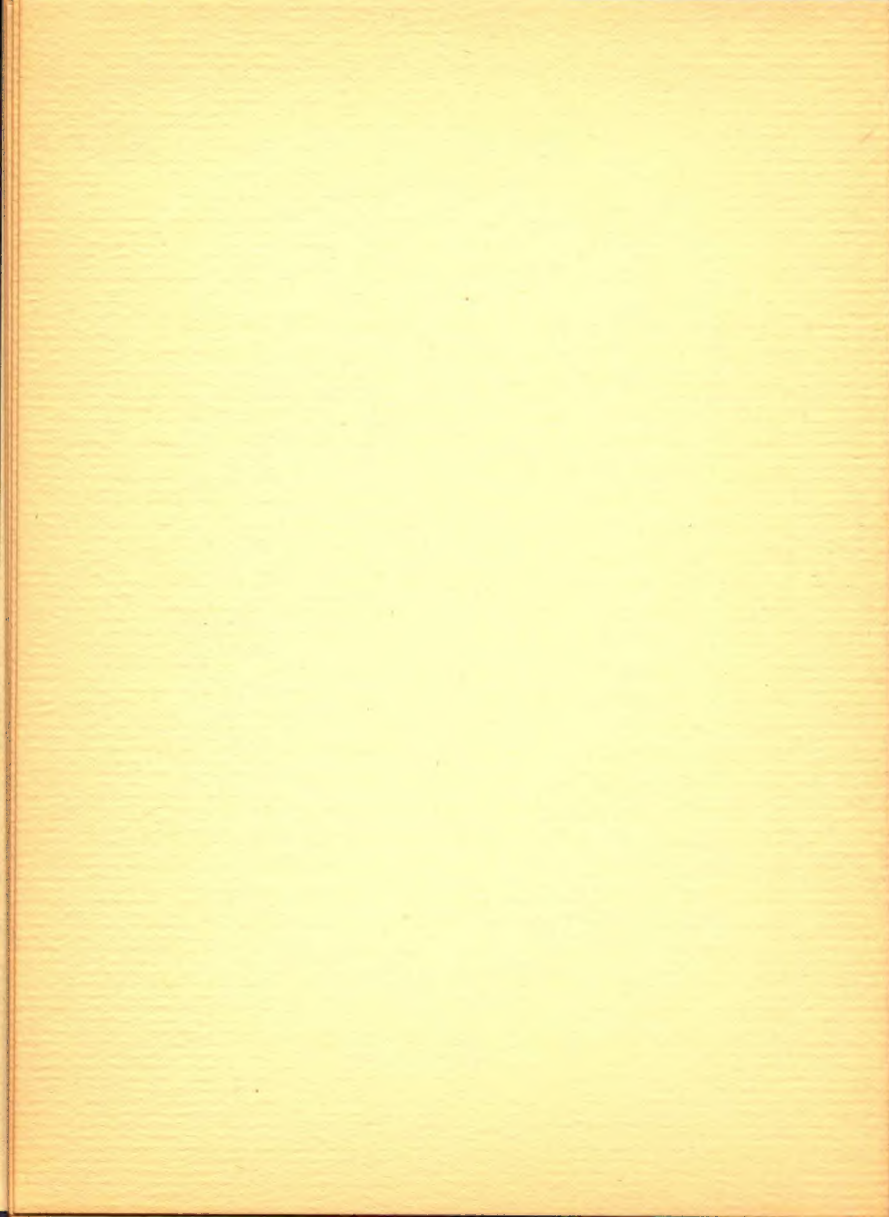
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THE frontispiece, 'The Mass of S. Giles,' is reproduced by permission of the National Gallery. The scene is the Royal Abbey Church of S. Denis outside Paris. Above the altar is the golden altarpiece, given by Charles the Bald and destroyed in the French Revolution. Beside the altar kneels an unknown king who is excommunicate for a grave sin which he cannot bring himself to confess. During the Mass an angel appears to S. Giles with a scroll on which is written the king's crime—the words . . . *quoddam turpe facinus* . . . are legible. It is an indirect and miraculous confession.

The introductory prayer is taken substantially from *The Divine Rule of Prayer*; the colloquies are chosen from those in Volume II, Part I, of *The Final Passover*; the prayers on the words from S. John's gospel are adapted from *Bible Teachings*; the three prayers on pp. 56–8 are in a manuscript of the July retreat given to the Society of S. John the Evangelist in 1876; the paraphrase of the twenty-third psalm is from *The War Songs of the Prince of Peace*.



FOREWORD

THIS little book is not intended to be another manual of preparation for Holy Communion ; but it is hoped that these prayers, drawn from Father Benson's writings, may supply to those who practise meditation some considerations upon the mystery of that Heavenly Food by which we are made partakers of eternal life.

These considerations come to us in the form of prayers and colloquies. Their use in this way, as addressed directly to God rather than to the soul or the intelligence, is often helpful in overcoming the difficulty which besets us when we try to turn our reflections and considerations into prayer. Their use may also facilitate the passing from meditation to a more affective form of prayer. They should therefore be used only in small portions at any one time of prayer, so that the soul may ponder with care and with love upon this mystery of eternal life given here and now to frail and sinful beings living under conditions of time and space.

'Eternity,' as Illingworth said in a sermon preached in Keble College Chapel, 'is rather the quality of timelessness than a quantity of time.' It is indeed an absurdity to think of eternity in terms of time, though it is hard for us not to do so. The New Testament teaches us to think of it in terms of *life*. I cannot but think that these prayers of Father Benson may teach us something about that 'quality of timelessness' which we call eternal life. How little we who live in the midst of a world of change and decay, and with a

FOREWORD

nature in itself frail and perishing, can know or understand of that life which began at our Baptism and is nourished by our Communion. We may seek to relate our Communion to the work of the Church and to our own and our neighbours' immediate needs ; but it needs great effort to realize within ourselves this gift of eternal life, which constitutes the Church the mystical Body of Christ and makes us his members. The wonder is that a nature such as ours should have this amazing capacity to receive and to live by that eternal life which God hath given us and which is in his Son. That we should be able only very dimly to perceive the operation of this gift within the Church and ourselves is not surprising ; but that we should, through any neglect of our own, fail to ponder upon it, or to seek to penetrate into its mysteries, is to run the risk of taking a course by which we may 'possibly save time but certainly lose eternity.'

OXFORD,
Candlemas, 1934.

W. B. O'BRIEN, S.S.J.E.
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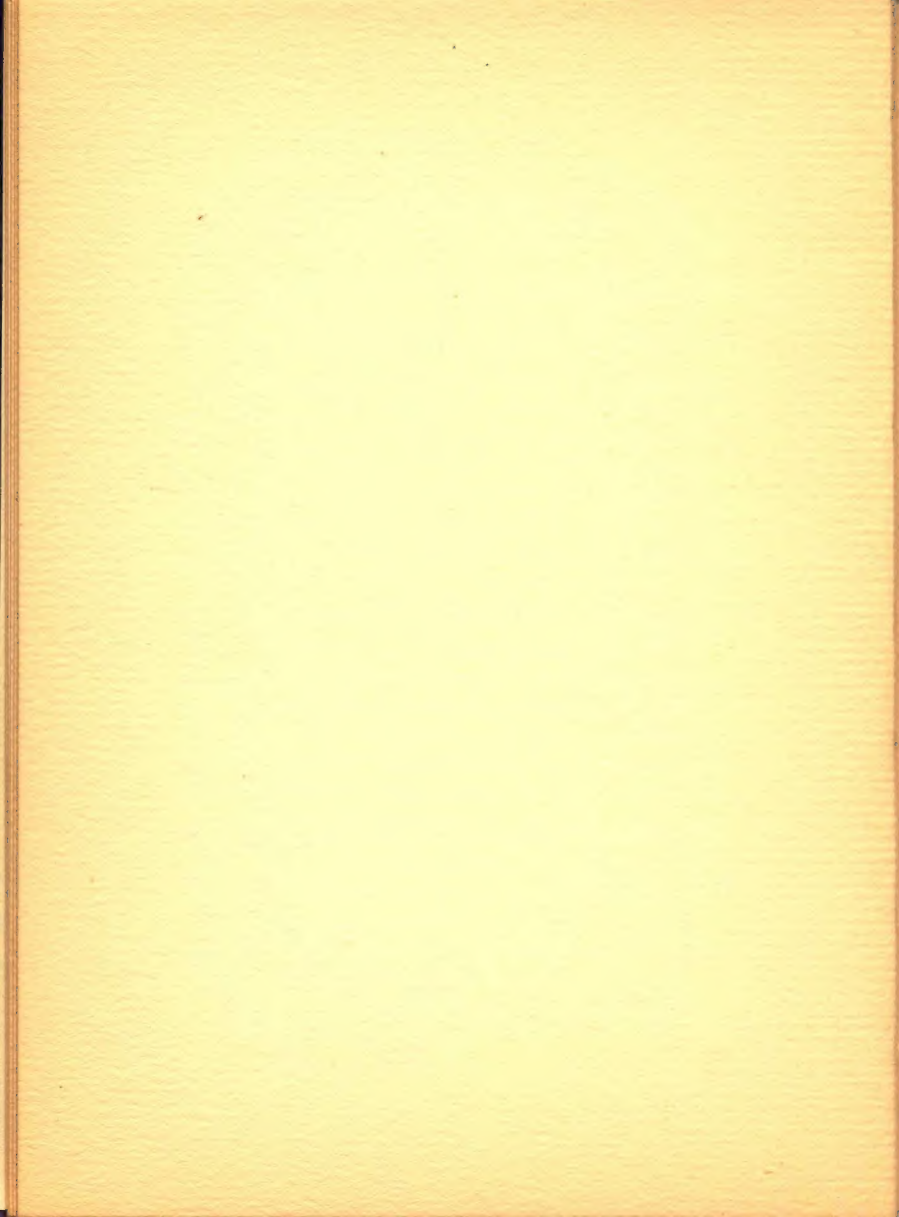
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AN INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

'Give us this day our daily bread.'

O Lord, our Father, which art in heaven,
grant unto us thy grace,
as the children of thy kingdom,
that we labour not only for the meat which perisheth,
but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.
Give us the true bread from heaven,
even the flesh of thy dear Son,
for he is our spiritual food and sustenance,
without which we can have no life in us.

By participation in this bread
thy faithful people are all made one bread, one body,
in union with each other,
and with Christ the Head,
through the operation of the Holy Ghost,
consecrating the sacrament thereof,
and quickening those who partake of the sacrament.

Multiply throughout the whole world
the opportunities of grace,
making high the heap of corn in the earth,
lowly in outward form,
as being upon earth the food of the lowly,
but high above the hills of the earth,
as being given from heaven—
the food which shall raise us up at the last day.

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Quicken our desire for this food ;
vainly is it given unless thou first give to love and desire it.

Give us a loving faith
frequently to approach thine altar,
profitably to partake of the divine mysteries
thereon presented to us,
habitually to cherish the gift of union with thy Son
as the strength of our daily life.

Grant unto us, as a consequence of this sacramental union,
that we may daily live by his energy ;

and that, being sustained
by the word which proceedeth from thy mouth,
it may be our daily meat to do thy will.

Strengthen our spiritual life
by all those works to which thou callest us.
Help us to find in the accidents of the world
occasions of communion with thee.

As all things carry out thy will towards us,
let all things bind us to thyself ;
and being thus bound in the bundle of life
with thee, our God,
let that contact nourish us
by the emanation of thy goodness.

Give us eyes to see thy wisdom
in the dispensation of all thy creatures ;
and a heart to embrace thy goodness
acting towards us in them all—
in all labour, to seek thee as our only rest ;
in all rest, to labour after thy divine contemplation ;
by the hope of thee, to be stimulated ;

AN INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

by the faith of thee, to be invigorated ;
by the love of thee, to be fed ;
daily to know thy presence,
and in that knowledge to find daily nourishment
unto everlasting life.

PART ONE

COLLOQUIES BASED ON PASSAGES FROM
THE NARRATIVE OF THE INSTITUTION
OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST



I

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES AT THE SUPPER

'And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.'

O Jesu, thou dost gather us round thyself in the ordinances of thy grace. Grant me indeed so to sit down with thee in faithful discipleship here on earth, that I may also find my place hereafter, when thou shalt call thy people to thy heavenly feast in the glory of thy kingdom.

My son, if thou wilt feed with me thou must feed upon me. Come to this feast, hungering after the heavenly food. According to thy hunger so shall thy refreshment be. I came into this dying world to die, that I might nourish thee unto eternal life. If thou wilt feed upon me truly, thou too must learn to die, for those who share with me in dying to the world shall not fail to find in me the life of God.

Most loving Jesu, I desire indeed to love thee above all things. That were no true food which should sustain me in this world and keep me away from thee. On thee would I feed, my true paschal Lamb by whose blood I am protected from the destroying angel, that so I may in thee pass over from this world of bondage and attain to the glory of the Father, where thou art now exalted.

II

THE PASSOVER WHICH JESUS DESIRED

'And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer : for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'

O Jesu, how great was thy condescension in coming down to earth ! Yet thou wouldst find thy glory in raising us from earth to heaven. This was thy desire. Thus wouldst thou make thy glory to shine above the heavens. Thou didst not for earth's sake devise aught to be erected upon earth ; but thou didst devise all, that thou mightest by the communication of thy heavenly power gather up the whole creation into the unity of the house of God.

My son, it is my joy to be the redeemer of all. Feed upon me, and thou shalt find the renewal which my glorified body gives. Yea, thou shalt be strengthened with my Spirit. Yea, thou shalt come forth from the bondage of this world of death. I am come to give my flesh for the life of the world.

O Jesu, as thou bringest me out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of grace, be thou ever with me during my pilgrimage. As thou bringest me through the waters of death, do thou bring me to the living heights of the heavenly Zion. As thou didst desire, even so teach me to love the

THE PASSOVER WHICH JESUS DESIRED

mysteries which thou hast ordained. Oh that I in the greatness of my need might have as true a hunger to receive thee as thou in thy fullness hast to give thyself to me ! O let thy desire to feed me with thy love create in me the desire of holy love to taste thy sweetness and to feel the invigoration of thy strength.

My son, blessed indeed are they that hunger and thirst after that righteousness which is to be found only in me. Thou canst not attain to the righteousness which God requires by the law which Moses gave. Grace and truth came to thee in myself, that thou mayest rise out of the state of death and rejoice in the righteousness of God.

O holy Jesu, let me feed on thee and praise thee for thy glorious power. Sweet must this food be to faithful souls. O let me experience its elevating power as often as I partake of the divine mysteries, and its abiding sovereignty of control, while I take heed through all the days of life to walk according to the law of thy sanctifying presence within me.

O Jesu, how can I praise thee ? Teach me to live worthy of that life wherewith thou didst desire to make me truly thine own. Let thy life shine out in my life.

My son, while thou seekest to live in my power thou must remember the bitterness of my passion. Think not that I call thee to share my triumph by any other way than by participating in my sufferings. My power is a living power, and thou must show the reality of its living influence upon thee. I have borne the world's hatred. I have faithfully lived in the Father's

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love. So must thou also suffer at the hands of the world, if thou wilt love the Father and abide in my love.

O Jesu, let me feed upon thee now under the veil of sacramental forms, that I may feed upon thee eternally in the glory of thine unclouded brightness. So take me into union with thyself, that I may have no other life but thine.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE BREAD

III

THE CONSECRATION OF THE BREAD

'And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you.'

O Jesu, lift up my heart to contemplate the glory wherein thou ever abidest with the Father, and fill me with the spirit of holy love, that I may be true to the law of thine eternal sonship, and by the grace of thine adoption may attain to the fullness of thy joy.

Yea, my son, my desire is that the love wherewith the Father hath loved me should be in thee. So will I dwell in thee, and raise thee to the true joy which no created being can know outside of me. Come to me in every holy Eucharist, and give thanks unto the Father for the glory of that Being which surpasses all thine understanding. Every communion shall open thine eyes to behold more of his glory. Thou canst not come unto the Father save by me. Come, and I will show thee all. But none can see that which I will show thee unless they close their eyes and their hearts to all else.

O Lord Jesus, my one joy is to look upward and feel my blindness. I know that what I cannot see now I shall see hereafter. Help me to love even now in my blindness, that hereafter I may see with joy ; lest by loving what I can see now, the sight of him who alone is worthy of love should prove to be my destruction.

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My son, remember that all things great and small are to be used in thanksgiving to God. Things are only to be accounted great or small according to the thankfulness wherewith men use them. What so trifling as the bread and wine which I now present? Yet do I give my whole Being therein.

Lord Jesus, help me to feed on thee with a return of gratitude, such as may strengthen me to use thy gifts with fullness of faith.

My son, learn at all times to rejoice in me. Love must ever rejoice in every communication from the beloved. Yea, thou must rejoice because I will strengthen thee to do all my will. Yea, thou wilt rejoice to surrender thy will to mine, and to suffer all things in my power for my sake. My everliving presence must arouse in thee the consciousness of a loving obedience.

Blessed Jesus, help me, as I feed on thee, to feel thy presence within me, that I may go forth in the strength of this food, and find myself formed anew in the controlling perfection of the activity of thy glory.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE CUP

IV

THE CONSECRATION OF THE CUP

'And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'

O Jesu, grant that by the blood of thy covenant I may indeed ever live before God ; and being ransomed through thy death from the bondage of nature, may rejoice in the adoption of thy redeeming love.

My son, I make my blood to flow as a stream of regenerating power, that thy soul being washed therein may evermore rejoice in the fellowship of God. The law of the Spirit of life which I thus communicate to thee must make thee free from the law of sin and death. Take heed, therefore, that thou account not the blood of the covenant, whereby thou art sanctified, as being an unholy, earthly thing. Thou must rise up in its power to show forth the holiness of the life wherewith I have quickened thee.

Lord Jesu, grant that thy precious blood may so purge the deepest recesses of my nature, that in the joy of thy purity I may quit the fascination of this outer world, and experience the rapture of that welcome of love wherewith the Father ever accepts both thee and thine.

O Jesu, may thy precious blood wash my soul from all the inherited evil of my own corrupt passions. Let every

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impulse of my natural life be so subdued by the calmness of thy divine purity, that I may act in all things true to the guidance of thy holy Spirit.

My son, I desire to see my image reproduced in thee by thus gathering thee into my own heavenly life. Mortify thine earthly members, that thou mayest live under my heavenly control. The flesh and the Spirit are at variance one against the other, but my blood shall keep thee true to the law of the Spirit if thou wilt live, as my redeemed ones live, dead unto the world along with myself.

O blessed Jesu, live thou evermore in me, and grant that I may live in thee. I seek no earthly things, but only that I may be found in thee. Be thou the light of my understanding, the joy of my affections, the guiding principle of all my acts.

O Jesu, may the holy Spirit ever act within me. May thy blood perfect within me, by the power of thy holy Spirit, such purity of life as befits the covenant of God.

My son, when thou drinkest of my blood, consider well what are the graces which are most necessary that thou mayest fulfil the law of my Spirit. There is no grace that any can require which my blood does not contain. Ask, and it shall be given thee. Use it to my glory, and it shall not fail thee in thy need. Put away whatever desires are at variance with its control. So shalt thou in the end wake up in my likeness, and be satisfied with it.

O blessed Jesu, how can I drink of thy blood and remain so unmoved? In every effort of holiness let me live true

THE CONSECRATION OF THE CUP

to thee, that thou mayest fill my whole being with the blessed transport of conformity to the will of the Father. Live thou within me, and let me know no other life than thine.

O Jesu, while I drink of thy precious blood, let me surrender myself to the joyous contemplation wherewith thy promised gifts should be adored. The touch of earth wakens me too quickly to the sensibilities of earth. Let thy touch waken me to the apprehensions of faith, the wondrous joy of thine eternal throne, whence this holy stream flows forth with gladdening efficacy to make me feel thy love.

My son, welcome gladly into thine heart that drop of life which comes from me to make thy nature thrill with sweet response, whilst with divine gladness I watch to see my joy made perfect in my people. I look into the heart of every communicant who drinks my blood, to see if there is that response of joy which I so joyously anticipate. Oh that all who communicate would look up to me from whom this drop of divine joy comes to them ! Alas, how are they held down by meagre desires and earthly fancies, instead of looking up to me with that trustful gaze which must make them live with the blessedness of my saints !

O Jesu, how blind and dull and earthly have my communions been ! Open mine eyes to contemplate thy mysteries. Without love I cannot see ; but if I see, I cannot fail to love. Would that every faculty of my nature were illuminated by the spiritual vision. So should every faculty of my nature be conformed to the excellency of thy glory.

V

THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST

'This do in remembrance of me.'

O Jesu, thou who art the eternal delight of the Father, and gatherest up all creation under thine own headship, that thou mayest cause all created things to minister to thy glory, help me to contemplate thy merits, that I may learn something of the joy which the eternal Father takes therein. All the glories of creation are merely external, empty, transitory, unless they are taken to be the manifestations of thy divine perfection, giving them substance, fullness, and eternity.

My son, if thou wouldest know my merits, yield thyself up to be transformed by partaking of them in the power of my holy Spirit. If thou wouldest draw near unto the Father, call upon him to remember my merits, claiming thy portion in those merits so that they may fill thine emptiness, reorganize thy deformity, outshine thy vileness, lift thee out of the vanity of the creature to the glory of the divine adoption.

O Jesu, I can only learn some little of the joy which the Father takes in thine adorable merits, by the experience of that love which for those merits' sake he gives to me. Wonderful is the joy of thy humanity, whereby thou dwellest at the Father's right hand. Adorable is the love of the Father whereby he exults in the heavenly enthronement

THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST

of thy humanity, inferior to him in its essence, but dignified with coequal participation of his own divine omnipotence.

My son, abide in me. Whatsoever thou shalt ask the Father in my name he will give it you. He himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from him.

Jesu, my all-glorious Saviour, thou art come from God, and thou hast left the world and art gone to the Father again. Lift me up with thine own self while I feed upon thee. Let the memorial wherewith thou dost unite me to the merits of thy heavenly oblation strengthen me to endure all the trials of this earthly pilgrimage. Let me not fall away from the merits of this holy sacrifice. O let me live separate from earth, as being consumed in the fire of thy perpetual presentation in glory, alive to God in the joyous fellowship of thy perfect love.

PART TWO

PRAYERS BASED ON PASSAGES FROM
THE SIXTH CHAPTER OF
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN

I

SEEKING JESUS

'The people therefore . . . took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. . . . Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.'

O my Jesus,
the Jews sought thee, desiring to partake of thy bounty ;
I would seek thee, desiring nothing from thee
but thyself alone ;
vain were all thy gifts without thee.
If I possess thee, what more can I need ?
The one joy of the multitudes of the blessed
shall be the vision of thee,
sustaining them in their heavenly life throughout eternity.
O grant me grace to behold thee now,
hidden from my outer sight ;
grant me to behold thee with the gaze of faith.

The outward eye sees but the form
wherewith thou art pleased to clothe thyself ;
by faith I would behold thee
in the glory of thine eternal kingdom.

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

No gift that thou givest can be empty :
nothing can be other than empty which has not thee
for its fullness.

I seek thee, then, blessed Jesus ;
I seek thee in thy gift,
and I am sure that I shall not seek thee in vain.

Yet, O my God, how can I contain thee ?
The heaven of heavens contains thee not,
the whole created universe cannot contain thee :
for the communication of thy glorious Being
thou needest not the extension of space,
who art exalted above all space.

O my Jesus, one and undivided,
thou givest thyself in many places at one time,
to each and all who come to thee.
Thou whose fullness alone filleth all that passeth not away,
fill me with thy presence.
Thou, O Lord, art the portion of mine inheritance
and of my cup.
O my Jesus, fill me with thyself.

THE MEAT WHICH ENDURETH

II

THE MEAT WHICH ENDURETH

'Labour . . . for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.'

Why do I seek thee, O blessed Jesu ?
Not that thou mayest sustain me in this perishing life
of the lower world.

They who feed upon thee feed upon the Eternal.
All else that thou givest us perishes in the using :
thou thyself perishest not.

We feed upon thee and thou remainest unconsumed :
thou makest us partakers of thine own eternity.

Day by day we need thee :
thou dost not fail us,
nor doth thy glory waste away.

Thou remainest the same.

Our nature wastes away by manifold infirmities
By sin we lose thee :

O let us feed on thee continually,
and so shall our strength be renewed.

Alas, we feed not upon thee as we ought !
Though we receive thy substance that it may be our own,
yet we fail of appropriating it
with the fullness of an absorbing faith.

Oh, that we could indeed so take thee into ourselves,
that we might be taken wholly into thee !

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Strengthen our faith with the power of thy divine love ;
feeding thus we shall indeed receive thee
into the very depths of our being,
and be partakers of thine everlasting life.

Woe is me, should I receive
the bread which endureth unto everlasting life
and yet not live thereby.

Thou livest in the power of thine own changeless life :
thou givest thyself to us,
that thou mayest raise us up and establish us in thy life.
Thy life we cannot have without thee,
who art thyself the life.

Grant that we may receive thee with faith
and hold firmly to thee in love,
that so we may be taken
into the fellowship of thy changeless glory.
In the strength of that meat
thou callest me to the blessed heights
of thine own eternity :
for thy sacred body is that meat which endureth
unto everlasting life,
making our sinful bodies clean from their corruption,
stablishing them, incorruptible,
in the fellowship of heavenly life.

Grant me, O my Jesu,
so to feed upon thy holy body day by day,
that all the corruption of my nature may be purged off
and, being unclothed of the natural body,
I may be perfected in the substance of thy glorious body.

THE MEAT WHICH ENDURETH

May I so feed upon thee who art the life,
that nothing shall remain to separate me from thee.
Though my natural substance pass away in death,
yet thy supernatural substance shall indeed be seen
as the meat which endureth for ever.

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

III

THE MANNA

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.'

'And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. . . . And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. . . . And they gathered it every morning . . . and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.'

O Jesu, thou hidden manna of the soul,
thou drawest near to us and we perceive thee not.
In the dark night of our earthly mind
we discern not thine approach :
silently thy holy Spirit accomplishes the wonder.
Help us to praise thee
for that thy holy Spirit does thus spread the banquet
of thy love
in secret power all round about us.

Grant us by the illumination of faith to behold the food
which in the darkness of our natural sense we cannot discern.

Morning by morning
we would desire to be fed with this heavenly food :
only in the light of thy resurrection can we behold it.

THE MANNA

As the children of the light,
by the grace of thy resurrection,
we draw near that we may feed upon that food
which only by the power of that light we can behold.

O blessed Jesu,
day by day thou givest me the opportunity
to gather this gift,
and all these mornings shall find their completeness
in the one great noonday of thine appearance in judgement.
Daily I need to feed upon thee :
for every day I must give an account.
When the judgement is come,
then will thy gift of grace be withdrawn :
while it is time let me feed upon that which thou givest.
Would that I could value thy gift aright :
the soul must starve that does not gather for itself thereof.

Most loving Jesu,
thou art an all-sufficing supply for our daily need.
Thou fillest the measure of our empty humanity
by the power of thy grace ;
not by reason of any eagerness of our own
to lay hold upon thee,
but by the truth of thine own promise.
Thou fillest the empty vessel of our nature
with the sufficiency of thy grace :
thou withholdest nothing of thyself from us.
We must measure that which we receive,
not by the varying standard of our own feelings,
but by the truth of thine own unchangeable glory.

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

O my Jesu,
open thou the eyes of my understanding,
that I may see that which thou givest.
In giving me thyself
thou canst not give me less than thou art :
teach me to know thee as thou art,
that I may see thy gift in a manner worthy of thyself
who art at once both the giver and the gift.

O my Jesu,
great is the wonder of thy gift to me :
no less great is the wonder of my sluggishness,
whereby I make so little profit of thy gifts.
Give me the true spiritual hunger for thyself,
that I may feed upon thy gifts.
By the gift of thyself
thou wouldest transform me into thine own likeness :
every gift of thy grace
is a call to the manifestation of thy perfection :
the sweetness of thy grace should fill me
with heavenly beauty.

The Israelites of old loathed the manna
as being light and unsubstantial.
O Jesu, Jesu, keep me from this sin ;
let me not hesitate to acknowledge
the true presence of thy heavenly substance,
that I may realize with grateful love the mystery of this gift.
The world despises thy gift,
for it longs rather to be fed with the good things of Egypt ;
but I would praise thee for thy goodness to us wanderers
in the wilderness of this world.

THE MANNA

The table which thou hast prepared
is a richer banquet than the world can ever know.

It needs the true palate to discern,
the true eye to see ;
but those who use this morning time of grace
shall praise thee more and more.

The world despises,
but they learn to love.

O taste and see how gracious the Lord is.
Evermore, blessed Jesus, give us this bread

IV

COMING WITH FAITH

*'I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never
hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.'*

O blessed Jesu,
grant me to come to thee,
that I may indeed find thy fullness :
so let me hunger that I may indeed be filled.
Thou givest me thy bread and thy cup,
that I may eat and drink thereof :
thy gift needs not to be renewed,
but my faith needs to be perfected.
As often as I come to thee,
let me come with a more perfect faith,
that I may receive thy gift with a more perfect satisfaction.

It is thou, eternal Wisdom, who hast said,
'They that eat me shall yet be hungry,
and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty.'
Yea, dear Lord, teach me so to eat and drink,
that I may hunger and thirst yet more :
I would not have my hunger abated until I have received thee
in all the fullness of thy truth.
Thou givest me this food,
that I may rise to desire some further revelation
of thy bounty.

So let me cherish that which thou hast given,
that I may desire that which thou hast yet to give :
feeding upon thee, I shall indeed grow into thy likeness.

COMING WITH FAITH

O my God,
I know not what gifts to ask for :
I commend myself to thee.
Give me that gift which is most necessary for me :
 reveal thyself within me
in such manner as shall best enable me to glorify thee :
 I long to be more like thee.
No gift of nature can deliver me from the tyranny
 which oppresseseth :
thy gift shall heal my infirmity and strengthen me for ever
 Give me, then, faith
 that I may be healed,
 and perseverance
 that I may no more fall back
into those corruptions from which thou dost deliver me.

I desire to praise thee
for each fresh gift of thy love :
only by thy gift can I show forth thy praise.
Continually thou givest
far beyond all that I can desire or deserve :
each revelation of thyself calls me to desire more of thee.

Be thou revealed within me,
not according to my unworthiness,
but according to thy glory.

Let me not come with the outward sight alone :
grant me so to contemplate thee as I come in faith,
that I may attain to the manifestation of thy perfect glory
 Earthly sight shall become darkened :
the true vision of thee shall be ever reaching onward,
 that I may at length be like thee
 when I shall see thee as thou art.

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

O blessed Jesu,
that which thou hast given
is the sure pledge of that which thou wilt yet give.
However long may be my journey, however great my need,
I can trust myself to thee,
that thou mayest supply all even to the end.
Never wilt thou suffer those to hunger
whom thou once hast fed :
let me, then, abide with thee
in such steadfastness of faith,
that I may always be able to rejoice in thy bounty.

O Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may see :
yea, let that which I see strengthen me
that I may abide faithfully with thee when I can see no more.
When darkness comes over me,
then let me still remain true in the confidence of holy faith.

‘ Yea, though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; . . .
Thou shalt prepare a table before me
against them that trouble me ’—
even the bread of life, which is thyself—
‘ thou hast anointed my head with oil,
and my cup shall be full.’

THE FATHER'S GIFT TO CHRIST OUR SECURITY

V

THE FATHER'S GIFT TO CHRIST OUR SECURITY

*'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him
that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'*

O Jesu,
my joy is to know that I am in thy keeping.
The Father hath not only given thee to me, but me to thee.
Had I to keep thee in my own strength,
then should I assuredly lose thee.
But now must I abide in thee that thou mayest keep me :
of all that the Father hath given thee thou wilt lose nothing.

Powerful are the enemies that would take thee from me,
but thou art mightier than they :
when my own grasp would fail, thy right hand shall uphold me
Vainly do I attempt to resist mine enemies by myself :
if I give myself up to thee to rest in thy keeping,
then am I safe.

Alas, that I so often attempt to meet them
in my own strength !

Alas, that I so often forget thee !
Whenever I do so, I must always fail.
My security is to live simply acknowledging
that I belong to thee.

While I serve thee thou wilt keep me :
when I leave thee there is none that can help.

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Yea, if I leave thee I am lost,
for my only life is in thee.
The life which I have received is not mine,
though it is in me :
it is thine and thou callest me to live therein with thee.
The life for which I praise thee
is not as the life of nature
from which thou deliverest me.
The life of nature must end,
for I have received it into my own littleness :
the better life is eternal,
for it is ever in thyself
and none can receive it save by union with thee :
none can keep it save by abiding in thee.

I am thine :
thy life is in me, therefore thou wilt keep me.
Thou art love :
didst thou withdraw thy love,
thou wouldst cease to be thy living self.
When dangers are round about me,
let me always take refuge in thy love.
Woe is me, that I should ever set thy love aside,
or seek for any joy or strength save in thy love,
or yield to any fear except the fear of forfeiting thy love.
Thy love is my life :
my life in thee is eternal as thy love.

O loving Jesu,
thou hast given thyself to die that thou mightest find me :
thou wilt not let me go.
I was lost in the darkness of death :

THE FATHER'S GIFT TO CHRIST OUR SECURITY

thou camest into this valley of darkness to seek me :
when I lose thee, then does the darkness come over me again.

But thou findest me,
and thou makest thy light to shine within me
that I may know thee.

Yea, in darkness, it is thy voice which ever recalleth me.

As thou didst find me at the first,
so dost thou call me continually :
in the very darkness thine eye seeth me :
thou reachest forth thine hand to hold me :
with thy touch thou givest me sight.

It is thy grace alone which can restore me to live anew
in the light of thine own love.

Surely my destruction is of myself,
but in thee is my help found.

Thou art gone to the Father,
but thou wilt not fail to keep thy people
whom thou hast left upon the earth.

Great is my unfaithfulness.

I am ever falling from thy love ;
yet does my unfaithfulness call me to love thee only the more.

I might cease to love thee,
if I found that thou didst cease to love me ;
but thy changeless love
speaks with a voice to which I must give ear.

O Jesu,

let me rejoice to abide in the power of thy grace ;
yea, to suffer the loss of all things rather than to lose thee.

Bitterly do I know my own weakness,
who have so often wandered away from thee.

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

To no one else could I return after such countless falls.

But thou, O Jesu, art unchanging love.

Thou wilt save to the uttermost
all who come to God through thee.

Thou hidest thy glory in the sacrament of thy love,
that I may feed on thee.

Give me the grace of perseverance,
that I may abide in thee.

THE SECRET VOICE OF THE FATHER

VI

THE SECRET VOICE OF THE FATHER

'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him : . . . Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.'

O God, who can tell how thou speakest to the soul ?
Blessed is the soul that hears : he that hears shall live.

Thy voice giveth life :
whence thy voice cometh I cannot tell :
it cometh from the infinite abyss of thy glory :
I cannot fathom it.

Finite is the creation which I see :
infinite is thy creative power which is hidden beneath it.
I only know that thy voice cometh from thyself :
thou art infinite love.

Thy word came from thy infinity to fill my nothingness.
Thy voice is the voice of the Creator.

As of old thou didst say,
'Let there be light' : and there was light ;
even so didst thou speak in my heart.
Thy word created in me the very faculty of hearing,
which by nature I had not had.

Thy voice calls me ever nearer to thyself.
Since thou hast called me out of nothing,
thou wilt call me to a truer life than that which I now possess
When thy voice called me out of nothingness,
I had no choice but to obey :

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

I had no consciousness wherewith I could refuse :

I had no will.

But now thou hast drawn me
to partake of thine own volition :
thou desirest to draw my will
to the acceptance of thy goodness.

O my God,

only those can learn by the teaching of thy voice
who are transformed into thine own likeness.

The words of men tell of thee :
they teach not the soul which merely hears them.
To know thee as thy voice teaches is indeed to live :
none but those who are taught of thee
can have eternal life.

O my God, speak thou within my soul,
and let me receive thy word with gladness.
'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'

Great is the gift which thou hast given us
in the covenant of thy Son :
he is thy very incarnate Word.

By him thou speakest,
not as of old thou didst speak by the prophets :
they spake in the weakness of the letter,
but now thou hast sent forth the Spirit of thy Son
into our hearts.

Open thou mine ears that I may hear :
enlighten the eyes of my understanding,
that I may behold
the wonderful things of thy law.

THE SECRET VOICE OF THE FATHER

So let me hear what thou wouldest teach,
by coming to him who is thine incarnate Word.

Thou speakest to me by sending him
in the fellowship of this earthly nature
which he has assumed :

do thou enable me to hear thy voice speaking in him,
by taking me into that fellowship of the holy Spirit
by whom he took upon himself this nature.

With the ears of nature I cannot hear thy voice :
with the natural reason I cannot understand
that which thou by supernatural utterance declarest.

O my God,

I am poor with a deeper poverty than the mere want
of worldly riches :

I am poor in the misery of my nature,
because I cannot hear thy voice.

Thou hast sent thy Son,
that we by his poverty might be made rich :
to us poor,

with all the poverty of a nature despoiled by sin,
thou makest the glorious gospel of thy riches to be preached.

Let me not be dull of hearing
by perversely listening to the miserable voices of the world.
Nay, let every other voice be silent
and do thou alone speak.

Draw me with the transforming power of thy inward call,
that I may find myself rejoicing in the embrace of thy love :
let me hear the voice of everlasting benediction,
wherewith thou wouldest have me to be accepted
in the beloved.

VII

THE EVERLASTING LIFE OF THE FAITHFUL

'Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life.'

O my Jesus,
how little do I value that knowledge of God
wherein my eternal life consists.
In this world I cannot have it except with much obscurity,
by reason of the outer flesh.
Oh, that I could become dead to other things,
that I might live in thee unto the Father !
The consciousness of other things is death :
I cannot truly live until I am wholly lost to all,
so as to have no other consciousness
but that which is found in thee.

O let me feed upon thee day by day :
that I may be taken out of the misery of my sinful flesh
and may live in the glory of thy flesh,
wherein thou art glorified.
Alas, that I can feed upon thee so often
in the sacrament of thy love
without endeavouring to gain, by that whereon I feed,
the experience of the wisdom
which thy holy nature enshrines !

THE EVERLASTING LIFE OF THE FAITHFUL

In that wisdom is thy life,
even that wisdom whereby thou knowest the Father :
in that wisdom is my life,
for they who are taught of God by feeding upon thee
shall live in the glory of that beatific vision.

O incarnate Wisdom,
in whom is life, and that life is the light of men,
let me feed upon thee now by faith
in the hidden virtue of thy sacramental gifts,
that I may be found in thee
in the day of thy manifestation,
and may see thee as thou art
in the glory of the Father.
Grant me, O Lord, in this world knowledge of thy truth,
and in the world to come life everlasting.

VIII

THE LOVING WARNING OF JESUS

'Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?'

O Jesu,
thou speakest in loving warning to thy faithful people.
Thou wilt not have any to abide with thee
until thou hast fully tried them :
thou knowest by what trial we may best be disciplined
that we may abide in thy love.

O Jesu,
thou wouldest teach me to distrust the impulse
by which I have been seeking thee :
thou wouldest open my heart to recognize the guidance
of thy holy Spirit
as the only true power whereon I can rely.
It is not enough that I have come to thee,
unless, indeed, I persevere in steadfast allegiance.
Thou wouldest test
the supernatural reality of my first coming
by the persevering love wherewith I am strengthened to abide.

Alas, how ready I am to think I have attained
because I have approached !
Yet it is not enough to have found thee as the door of heaven
unless I enter in,
so as to dwell in the security of thy divine manifestations.

THE LOVING WARNING OF JESUS

O purge me from all superficial judgements,
that I may rejoice to welcome thee
in whatsoever form thou art pleased to show thyself.

Let me not approach thee
with the natural understanding alone,
but let me embrace thee
in the firm and unchanging grasp of the divine love
which thou givest.

Without love none can know thee,
for thou art Love incarnate :
the love whereby we know thee
is the love whereby thou thyself dost draw near to us,
even the love wherewith thou ever abidest
in the love of the Father.

The love wherewith thou comest to us as Man
is the same love wherewith thou abidest
in the bosom of the eternal Father as God—
even the power of the holy Spirit of love,
whose blessed anointing is the secret fragrance
of all thine actions.

By that same love alone can we know thee,
who art ineffable to every earthly tongue ;
or search into thy mysteries,
which far surpass the limits of any created intelligence.

O by that changeless love
let me evermore abide with thee.
Pour out upon me the abundance of thy sustaining gifts.
' Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe ' :
if thou let me go, then must I perish.

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

O my Jesu,
dost thou ask if I will go away from thee ?
How can I go away from thee, who art my only joy ?
And yet I cannot help myself if I am left to myself.
I know that I shall even now surely go away
unless, in spite of myself, thou hold me near :
my only confidence, good Lord,
is in thy knowledge of thy changelessness.
I know that thou wilt not leave me :
therefore may I promise that I will not leave thee.
Without the drawing of thy love I had not come to thee :
in the confidence of thy love I will abide with thee.

Truly I know not what thou wilt require
of those who abide with thee :
I know that thou with whom I would abide
art the all-wise lover of souls :
I will yield myself in blindness to thy guidance,
rather than walk in the dangerous wisdom
of my own self-will.
This, good Lord, is what thou requirest of us.
To abide with thee is to be dead to all besides thee,
for thou art the eternal life :
those cannot walk in the way of life eternal
who would walk in the way of the life which passeth away.

I rejoice, most blessed Jesu,
as thou leadest me onward
to that which makes my outer nature fail :
every fresh manifestation of thee
must be a death to that which I am by nature :

THE LOVING WARNING OF JESUS

I cannot abide with thee unless I advance
in my apprehension of thee,
nor can I advance unless I die to that which is behind.

O let thy love keep me evermore in life,
that I may not go away.
Lead me ever onward,
that I may remain secure in thy love to all eternity.

THREE PRAYERS FROM A RETREAT

O LAMB of God, slain before the foundation of the world according to the purpose of the divine predestination, and giving forth the glory of eternal life to those who are fed with thyself, grant that we whom thou hast called to feed upon thee continually in the holy sacrament of thy love may indeed experience the grace and virtue of that sacrament, and find the ecstatic joy of that holy sacrament, and rise in all the energy which that blessed sacrament conveys ; that our life may indeed be glorified upon the earth by the manifestation of thy heavenly power, and may be perfected for the glory of thyself hereafter in the endurance of the discipline to which we are called. Do thou enable us so to meditate upon the mystery of that divine love whereof thou makest us to drink, that we may indeed thirst more and more for thy sweetness, and be increasingly sustained by thy grace.

* * *

O blessed Jesu, in thy holy body all the glory of the love of God is enshrined. O Jesu, thy sacred body is the temple of the eternal Trinity wherein the love of God shines forth in undivided energy for evermore. Grant that as we are gathered into this thy holy body we may evermore live in the fellowship of thy divine life, and having thy holy blood poured into our hearts we may be purified from all the unworthy affections of earth, and may rejoice to yield our-

THREE PRAYERS FROM A RETREAT

selves up to thee to be the instruments of thy love unto the Father. Oh, whatsoever thou callest us to do upon the earth let us do it for thy sake as thine own true offering to the eternal Father ! Let us learn to act from the impulse of thy love, and with that motive which moves thy holy love, doing all things to the glory of the Father in the power of thy holy Spirit. Yea, blessed Jesu, grant that we may present all our works in thee and from thee unto the Father, beginning them at thy impulse, carrying them on by thy sustaining power, and perfecting them not as ours but as thine own unto the Father, that he may accept us as being no longer our own but truly and indeed given unto thee.

* * *

O blessed Jesu, how little do we know as yet of that divine life whereinto thou hast called us. But as thou art pleased day after day to feed us with thyself, so do thou of thine infinite love make our hearts to glow more and more with the power of thy holy Spirit, and perfect our understanding that we may at length attain to that which is beyond all earthly knowledge, that we may know the length and breadth and height, and may know that love of thyself which passeth knowledge, being filled with the fullness of God. Yea, gather us into the blessed experience of thine own unchanging love. Let each partaking of this sacrament communicate to us some fresh gift, and give us grace that we may so receive it that it may indeed turn to our increasing glorification. Glorify us in thyself. O be thou pleased to accomplish it by the divine discipline of thy love. We shrink from nothing. We refuse nothing, if only we may attain to more and more of thy love. O blessed Jesu,

COLLOQUIES AND PRAYERS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

we are sure that thou art ever calling us to love thee more. Give us grace, then, to correspond with all thy holy purposes. We yield ourselves trustfully to thee. Do with us what thou wilt. Teach us how thou lovest us. Teach us to love thee.

A PARAPHRASE OF THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

A PARAPHRASE
OF THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

THE Lord doth feed me : want can ne'er be mine.
He folds me where the tender pastures grow :
He leads me forth where restful waters flow.
My soul he will reclaim.
Yea, in the righteous highway he will guide,
True to his name.

What though I tread the vale of death's dark shade,
With thee at hand, no wrong can make afraid,
Upon thy rod, thy staff, with comfort stayed.
Before my troublers thou a feast hast spread :
Thine unction's fatt'ning fragrance sheers¹ my head,
And richly is my cup replenishèd.

Goodness and mercy follow me right sure,
Till all life's days be past.
So the Lord's house shall be my home secure,
Through length of days to last.

¹ To sheer is to acquit from blame. Sheer Thursday is an old name for Maundy Thursday, applied with allusion to the purification of the soul in confession ; and perhaps also, in its other meaning of making bright or pure, with reference to the practice of washing the altars on that day.

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